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Social service in a great
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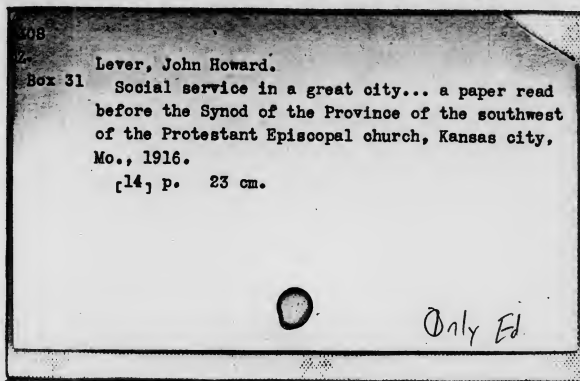
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SOCIAL SERVICE IN A GREAT CITY

BY THE

REVEREND JOHN HOWARD LEVER

Missionary to the City Institutions, St. Louis, Mo.

A paper read before the Synod of the
PROVINCE OF THE SOUTHWEST
of the Protestant Episcopal Church,
Kansas City, Mo., 1916

Printed by order of the Synod

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, KANSAS CITY, MO.

5 Aug 1916 MJS

The work of the Mission to City Institutions in St. Louis, as you will see by the chart, is done in nine institutions, the Sanitarium or Insane Asylum, the Infirmary or Poor House, the City Hospital, Jail, Workhouse, Koch Tuberculosis Hospital, Industrial School for Delinquent and Dependent Boys and Girls, the Bellefontaine Farm for boys, and our own Church Home for Convalescent Women. These nine institutions have a population of about five thousand men, women, and children, of whom we reach through services and through service about one-fifth, or one thousand. First then, let me give you an outline of the work. We hold at least one service every week in every institution except the Tuberculosis Hospital and the Workhouse. At the Workhouse we hold services every other Sunday and at the Tuberculosis Hospital we have the Holy Communion once a month or whenever it is necessary. The missionary visits every institution regularly and two of his assistants visit the City Hospital and the third visits the other institutions in which the population does not change so frequently as at the City Hospital. The work done includes the providing of reading matter, fruit, and clothes, and at the Jail and Workhouse the securing of paroles, and the budget, exclusive of salaries, is \$1,200 a year and as much more as we can get. And especially important is the work of the Deaconess in the Maternity Ward of the City Hospital. She does nothing else but the work in connection with that ward, working in cooperation with the Social Service Department of the Hospital. She secures baby-garments for the many babies who come into the world whose mothers have no clothes for them; she talks with the mothers, she follows them to their homes or their working places, she makes herself for every one of them a friend, and especially does she in the case of unmarried mothers try to get those mothers to see in their children an opportunity rather than a disgrace; she tries to awaken in them a sense of motherhood, proud, responsible, loving motherhood. For, after all, let us not forget, as my teacher in theology once said, that those babies are not illegitimate, they are perfectly legitimate; it is the parents who are illegitimate, and those ba-

bies may claim equally with other babies a portion of sun and air, and food and love. Such is a bare outline of the work, sufficient, I think, to enable you to understand what I am talking about as I proceed. For there are the institutions, and I take it, what you want to know is, what kind of people do we find in those institutions, and what does the church try to do for them?

The first characteristic of the majority of the inmates in the city institutions, except the City Hospital, that strikes the observer, is the lack of mental alertness. In other words, the majority are sub-normal, and not only that, but they are feeble-minded. In other words, they are not responsible for their actions, and can never be held responsible. Their lack of mental power is permanent. And yet visitors who go with me to the Jail and Workhouse almost invariably exclaim upon coming away: "What intelligent faces there are there." Of course they are, because let us not get the idea that there is a feeble-minded type any more than there is a criminal type, except perhaps in the case of exaggerated features.

For instance, there is a girl whom I know, whom we found in the City Hospital, pretty and attractive. In every respect she seemed normal except that she was inclined to be morbid. And yet it is a sin to allow that girl her freedom. She is a source of contamination to the community, a real danger to its health and morals. She should be confined all her life both for her sake and for ours. But where can she be sent? Not to any prison, because she has not been guilty of any offense for which she could be sent to prison; not to Marshall, the State School for the Feeble-Minded, because there is no room for her there! not to our Insane Asylum, for two reasons. One is that I doubt if they would consider her bad enough. The other is that it seems a sin, a shame, to put feeble-minded, to say nothing of imbeciles and idiots, together with the insane. Have you stopped to think that many of the insane are insane only at intervals, and then only on certain subjects, such as religion or fancied persecution? This being so, how would you, if you were insane, like to be herded with the feeble-minded or the imbeciles or the idiots, some of whom are too disgusting for description? Do you think that association with such creatures will very

greatly improve the mental condition of a decent man or woman whose mind may be only temporarily disabled or on only one subject? And more than that, the feeble-minded themselves would be much better off by themselves and out of doors. They may be given much greater freedom than the insane, and many of them seem quite normal under outdoor, healthful conditions. It is true, their minds cannot be improved much, but their hands can, and many of them become skillful in certain manual occupations.

There are then in this connection three points I would impress upon you. First; that the feeble-minded are incurable. It must be life-imprisonment for them, because, though their condition may be ameliorated in some ways, they can never hope to become self-supporting, self-depending members of society.

The second point follows from the first, and this is that the imprisonment must begin as soon as it is definitely ascertained that the child is mentally deficient. Of course, the imprisonment must not be considered as punishment, because the child is not and cannot be considered responsible, any more than the feeble-minded child who, while its father was sleeping, cut off the father's head, and when asked later why it committed this awful deed, answered: "Because I thought it would be such fun to see father looking for his head when he awoke."

Third, this custodial care of feeble-minded children we owe to them and to ourselves. To them because they are not able to care for themselves, and to ourselves because if they are at large they are a danger, a terrible danger. It is the feeble-minded who have the largest families, most of them illegitimate; it is the feeble-minded girl who spreads disease; it is the feeble-minded boy who, in a fit of unreasoning, murderous rage, kills his stepmother, whom he himself called his best friend on earth. The feeble-minded, in short, are infinitely more dangerous than the so-called criminal, who commits one offense, perhaps for food, though they appear harmless and inoffensive.

Lifelong care, then, is the only solution of this problem, together with better economic conditions, of which I shall speak later. Lifelong care! And yet we see feeble-minded, epileptic children neglected until they do something

perhaps which causes them to be brought to the Juvenile Court. There they are warned (imagine warning a child who doesn't know right from wrong, or why right is not wrong) and delivered again to their parents, who may not know much more than their children. The next step (for there is always a next step with such children) in St. Louis is the Industrial School for a few weeks, there to undergo a course of study prepared not by the teachers, who are doing their best with hopelessly inadequate equipment, but by those of their fellow-students who have lived longer than they have, and can train them in evil. Next their lack of polish in degeneracy is removed at Boonville, where they can stay only till they are twenty-one. At twenty-one, with the mind of a child and the body of a man, they are sent into the world fully equipped for what? Why, for anything from petty larceny to murder, for anything except for the ways of righteousness. You see the point, how these children are treated not from the preventive, but from the punishing, the retributive standpoint, softened a little, perhaps better, made a little mushier and slushier by the activities of gentle ladies and long-haired men in their behalf. As Lapage so well says, "We treat the mentally deficient on the ground of their criminal offenses rather than on the ground of their mental condition." And so Missouri is among the backward States which have neglected and ignored this problem, a problem which you would feel acutely if you visited constantly the city institutions.

And the hydra-headed monster of evil is revealed in a new form in the drug habit. Year after year have good people concerned themselves with and attempted to solve the problem of intoxicating liquors, and it has been right that they should. Time was when I was not a prohibitionist, but I am one now. The uncompromising attitude toward this evil seems to me now not only the right, but the only feasible and the practical attitude. But in our onslaughts upon this admittedly terrible evil, we have ignored the rise and spread of a new evil, or new to us at any rate, though an old one in the Far East. This new evil is the enormously increased use of such drugs as opium, morphine, cocaine, and heroin. We shudder at the sight of a besotted drunkard, with his manhood drowned in alcohol. But such a sight does not com-

pare in horror with a drug fiend who is just recovering from a debauch. Small wonder is it, then, that there is very, very little hope of reform of a drug victim, even after prolonged medical treatment. Considering this, does it not strike you as absurd that such a man or woman should be sent to the workhouse for thirty or sixty days? What do you suppose the judge has in mind in giving that sentence? Punishment? But how can you punish a man for a habit which is absolutely beyond his control? Or cure, perhaps? But if three years of confinement is not a guarantee of cure, what can thirty or sixty days accomplish? The drink habit is similar, though not so hopeless. Both habits need medical treatment, the building up of nerves and tissues, and also spiritual treatment, the building up of the will. Men under the influence of such habits should be given not any certain, definite amount of time to serve in confinement, but they should be sent to an industrial farm, there to stay until, in the opinion of the physician in charge, they are reasonably certain of cure. Then we shall be spared the enactment of such a farce as is constantly repeated at the workhouse in St. Louis, in the sentencing of two men, Harry Allen, and a colored man known as "Cokey" Charlie. Allen is a drunkard, Charlie is a drug-fiend, and both are usually in the workhouse. In the register for the last five years, there is hardly a page on which their names do not appear. And say they are released on a Monday. The wagon from Police Headquarters makes three trips a week to the workhouse with prisoners. Then, if Allen and Charlie are released on a Monday, and do not reappear at the workhouse on the Wednesday trip, everybody is vastly surprised, and wonders what is keeping them. This ridiculous farce would be impossible if the judge could send such men to a farm, not to be punished but to be cured, or at least an attempt made to cure them. This, then, is another problem and its solution, in which you can be interested, and not only in the treatment of unfortunate victims of drugs, but also in the manufacture and sale of drugs. A national law prohibiting entirely the sale of drugs except on a physician's certificate, has gone into effect, but to be effective that law must have behind it the strong and certain influence of public opinion brought to bear upon the local druggist. Let us remember that drugs are infi-

nately more dangerous, that they do infinitely more harm, than intoxicating liquors, and that though we do well to be interested in the regulation and ultimate suppression of the manufacture and sale of liquors, we must take even more care in the matter of drugs.

Another problem is that of vagrancy, because it is vagrants who clog our police courts, fill the workhouse, and sponge on charity. Let it be understood that now I am speaking of tramps, of men who simply travel from place to place without any intention of securing work. I do not now speak of the so-called intermittent or seasonal laborers, those men whose occupation takes them from place to place according to the season, and who genuinely desire employment. I am speaking of tramps, so-called in the country, called in the city beggars and panhandlers. How shall we treat them, and what shall be our attitude toward them? Let me say that the problem of the tramp is complicated by the problem of unemployment, about which I shall speak in a moment. But here is a man who comes to your door and asks for food. What shall you do, or what ought you to do? If you are living in a city or a town which maintains an associated charities or provident society, you ought to send the man there. If you live in a community which has no such organization, I suppose you will have to feed the man, though I don't advise it, and do all you can toward the establishment of such a society. Of course, you often hear the criticism that such societies are heartless and unsympathetic. If they are unsympathetic with families, such criticism is deserved, and the harsher the better; but frankly, very little sympathy should be wasted on wanderers or tramps. They are utterly unworthy of sympathy or help, for several reasons. One is that many of them have deserted families. Another is that they are breaking the fundamental law that he who will not work shall not eat, and by work I mean a permanent, steady job, presuming, of course, that such a job can be secured. Another reason why we should be unsympathetic with such men is that they are a danger to the health and morals of the community. The real tramp is always a petty thief, without any scruples or morals as to women, and neither women nor property are safe where the tramp is concerned. But someone says, suppose a man who

seems to be a tramp is really a decent man? I am willing to suppose it, although it is almost wholly a supposition. Because do you know what experts say as to the proportion of decent men to tramps on the road? Three per cent. Three out of every hundred men on the road are fairly decent and really looking for work. Well, then, should we not help every one of the hundred lest we refuse aid to someone who is worthy? I answer, no, because I see no necessity for any one's being on the road. The fact that a man is beating his way to some vague destination is to me *prima facie* evidence that he is not worthy of consideration or sympathy, because the man who really has the chance of employment in some distant city can secure money from an associated charities or mayor of a city to send him there, and if he has not that definite offer of employment, of what earthly use is it for him simply to wander along vaguely looking for work? So I advise the utmost caution, even to usual refusal of help, in dealing with the man who comes to your house for food. You may say that you give food and money only for work done. That seems very firm and consistent, but the work you usually hand out is a trumped-up job which is no real equivalent for the food or money, and anyway it is simply encouraging tramping, which is an evil in itself, and which can be met only by community action. By community action I do not mean calling the police, but furnishing a central house where men might be lodged and fed in return for a certain amount of productive work done. Such a system is well developed in England and in Belgium. There a man who really wants to go somewhere, secures a card from the police station of his town, good for one night's lodging and food at the police station of the next town, in return for work, and so on from town to town, thus preventing any begging from house to house. Such a plan saves a man's self-respect and that is what a tramp or beggar wholly lacks, self-respect. Stop and think for a moment of the situation. Every individual human being on this earth deserves and has a right to demand a chance to earn a living and as good a living as his ability enables him to earn. That is his right; why, then, should he have to beg for a chance as a privilege? This being true, the strong, self-respecting man will not beg; instead he will order meals and then say,

"Charge it to the Mayor," or he will hold up and rob a well-to-do citizen. In other words, of the two, the tramp and the thief, it is the thief who deserves sympathy and consideration, because from the point of view of reform it is the alert thief and not the lazy tramp-criminal who offers the most hope. Remember, then, every time you feed or give money to a tramp or beggar you are committing an anti-social act, you are doing something which is contrary to the best interests of the community, because you are making it easier for a lazy, worthless, petty criminal to get along. Do you know that in parts of Switzerland when anybody gives anything to a beggar it is not the beggar who is liable to arrest and punishment, but the giver. That is the true perspective, because this problem of vagrancy will not be settled till two things happen. One is that men and women find backbone and common-sense enough to refuse aid to men "on the road." The other is that these tramps shall not simply be harried from community to community, but each town and city shall take care of its vagrants systematically. If every time you are tempted to give money to a tramp you would drop the money into a box, nickels, dimes, or quarters, and at intervals send it to me or to the Provident Association to give men from the Workhouse or Hospital a new start or to feed starving families, you would then be really and unselfishly charitable.

But now and finally I come to the most important, the most fundamental matter, that seems to be in all cases of crime, of feeble-mindedness, of vagrancy, at least a contributing factor and in the majority of such cases I believe it is the determining factor. This is the problem of earning a living. In its extreme form we call it unemployment, but the problem is there even though a man or a woman may be employed.

But the one outstanding, all-inclusive fact which stares us in the face as we do this work is the fact of poverty. We see it, of course, in all its nakedness at the Infirmary, the Poorhouse, 800 derelicts on the ocean of life, for whom the waves have been too high, eight hundred men and women for whom the world has no place. And we see this outstanding fact of poverty at the insane asylum. Well-fed, well-clothed, well cared for, those two thousand men, women,

and children are, and yet it is pertinent for us to inquire why they are there. Feeble-minded children, feeble-minded because their mothers and fathers were without proper food and housing, because they lacked even the necessities of life. So an insane man tells me that he owns all of North and South America and has just bought a gold-mounted yacht. I smile at first, and then I think of that man, intelligent and fairly well educated, having more than he can do to support his family until the strain is too much and his mind gives way. Poverty and the fear of poverty hovering over the minds of men! 500 children at the Industrial School, some as bright and alert as your own children, some mentally deficient, some with parents who cannot take care of them, and some without any parents at all, but it is poverty which is at the base of it all. And then the Jail and the Workhouse, filled with men charged with and convicted of all the degrees of larceny and offenses against property. I have met some real thieves, men like Chicago Kid and an old man of seventy, who have simply adopted the profession of stealing as their life work. There are some men like that. But only a few. And aside from them we have about 400 men arrested for the first time in their lives and convicted of stealing. Why? Because they were out of work. That and that alone is the answer.

Just one concrete case will suffice. Let the man be known as White. There are then in the case White, his wife, and three step children, children of his wife by a former marriage. Perpetual indigents, the circuit attorney called them. And that is what they were, perpetual indigents. Why not? A man who never had a chance to go to school, who always had to be a common laborer, who had a family of four besides himself, what could such a man be but a perpetual indigent, and by an indigent I mean the man who is always on the ragged edge of poverty, always on or near the pauper line. Yet this man had always worked and always paid his bills. But he couldn't, of course, save anything. They came to St. Louis. And then for weeks that man looked for work, but could find only odd jobs. Finally it came to the last step. Three consecutive days White left his house to look for work having had nothing to eat. On the fourth day he made his mistake. He asked a

man for work, was refused and thereupon struck the man with a rock, nearly killing him, and robbed him of about \$11 with which he paid his rent. And then the next day he started again to look for work, when the police arrested him. He stole \$11 to pay rent and buy food, the only theft he had ever committed. And do you know what penalty he faced? Do you know what was the very least, the minimum sentence, the judge could give him under the law? Five years in the Penitentiary! Of course, White made a mistake in striking the man. If he had waited until the man's back was turned and sneaked the money out of his pocket he could have got off with sixty days in the workhouse. This indicates White's lack of practice. The circuit attorney finally reduced the charge to larceny from the person, carrying with it a sentence of three years in prison, and White was sent to Jefferson City, his children put in our Orphanage. His own little baby has since died, and his wife has been in the City Hospital. Perpetual indigents!

Poverty, desperate poverty, the helpless, hopeless poverty which means slow starvation or perhaps an easy course for the first disease that comes. Can we realize what that kind of poverty means? Can we realize what it means for a mother to see her children continually underfed and thus handicapped for life even more than they are already? Can we realize what it means for a father to see the family for which he is responsible, looking in vain to him for the support which he owes them? Do we realize how serious the inability to get work often is to a man, and how it may mean the wrecking of his life. Are we, indeed, poor in spirit and in heart, in sympathy, and in understanding?

And what then shall we do? Hold services, administer the sacraments, and preach? Of course. They are the first and last things to be done. The congregations in those institutions are much more responsive and attentive than the average congregation in a parish church. The message of Christ through His Church is not so impersonal, so familiar to them as it is to us, and there is never a congregation in any institution which does not eagerly listen to that message. How many of you who come regularly to church listen carefully to the reading of the lessons? I venture to say that the time occupied by the reading of the lessons is rather a somnolent period for the average congregation.

That is not true of the congregations of the city institutions. The Bible is the same wonderful, inspiring Book to them that it has been to the faithful of all times. And no where can the power of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be seen and felt as it can be seen and felt at the Insane Asylum or the Poor House or the City Hospital. Truly, he must be a skeptic and cynic, indeed, who could not then readily admit and believe in the Real Presence of our Lord. But preaching! What shall I preach to the men at the Jail and Workhouse? Shall I preach about courage? But there is hardly a man there who doesn't know infinitely more about courage than I do, who has not brought his courage to a point higher than I feel I ever could carry it. Or faith, or hope, or patience, what do I know of those qualities compared with the man who can bravely leave his wife behind while he goes "over the road" for three or five years, or whose family is in want because he is confined? Preach, yes, I can urge those men to study and work and pray for the time when prosperity will not mean cut-throat competition and when every man will have a fair chance, and I can tell them that those who now are more fortunate than they also pray for that time to come—that is true, isn't it? But I cannot glibly and smoothly tell them to be good, because that would be humbug. No one who was really poor in spirit and in understanding and in sympathy could talk that way. But preach and administer the sacraments, yes, we can do that and will do that even though we have to curtail other parts of the work, because I want those men and women and children to feel that the Church of Christ really claims them for her own, though they may not admit it, and that she will not be content till all her children enter into their heritage.

And S. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, uses these words: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances and nailing it to his Cross." Ordinance, fragmentary, superficial, short-sighted, and we should be traitors to the Vision of God and weak in His service if we left those problems which are embodied in the weak, the criminal, the insane, to be dealt with only by such ordinances. In truth, St. Paul goes further and says we must blot them out. But not merely to blot them out, not to discard altogether the results of honest experiment and faithful work, but further than that and

higher than that, to nail them all to Christ's Cross.

What does that mean? Why, it means first of all, I suppose, sympathy for the individual. There is nothing that impresses the experienced visitor to the city institutions so much as the monotonous grind of it all. No sooner is a cell vacated by its occupant than it is occupied again by another human being, no sooner is a hospital bed left by its occupant than another takes his place. And there is the problem, how to be just as sympathetic for the second as the first, and for the third as the second, and so on without ceasing. Four hundred men at the Workhouse and out of the four hundred to pick this man who has made one mistake, and be so sure that he is honest and good at heart that one can ask the Judge for his parole and send the man back to Kansas City. Four hundred, and out of the four hundred to pick a boy whom one is confident is a good boy and back one's judgment with money. Two hundred men in the City Jail, and not only that, but a large number of the two hundred the worse and most degenerate of thugs, and out of that two hundred, yes, out of that nucleus of so-called hardened criminals, to pick one man, intelligent, above the average, and to secure his parole from the Penitentiary and spend time and money and prayer on him—and then have him fail and compelled to leave the State, your judgment belied, your sympathy betrayed, your time and money wasted—and then again to try again and again, confident that the law of averages is a divine law, and that God's successes outnumber His failures, that is what we mean, so far as Jail and Workhouse are concerned, by blotting out ordinances and nailing them to His Cross, leaving ordinances to Prosecuting Attorneys and jailers, and taking with us for our help and strength the power and love of Christ's sacrifice.

I have already spoken of the need of money in any such work as this and of some of the uses to which we put money, but one item in the budget I have not yet mentioned. That item is gasoline, for the missionary is the custodian of a Buick automobile, which was given for the work last year, and you may be interested to hear briefly how we use gasoline.

And I need money for gasoline. There is nothing sacred or romantic about gasoline, is there, and you would much

rather give money for something else, wouldn't you? I am sure you would, until you know how I use gasoline. Not in joy-rides. The missionary's automobile is a serious car, never on pleasure bent, even if it is described in its insurance policy as a pleasure car. First, since the car has been in use, it has averaged a thousand miles a month, two hundred and fifty miles a week, and that means gasoline. But, on the other side of the ledger, we have visits to all the institutions in the city and visits to homes for clothing and magazines. It means that singers were taken to the services in the institutions. It means that Koch Tuberculosis Hospital, 10 miles south of the city, is provided with an entertainment of singing and readings once a month, which without the car would be impossible. It means that the new Industrial School for Boys, 20 miles north of the city, is visited every week, weather permitting, and a service held, with lantern slides once in a while. And if any one thinks that that is a pleasant evening's ride, such a person does not know what the Hall's Ferry Road is like on a dark night 10 or 15 above zero. The missionary in the month of December held 26 services and had or made 163 calls, which would have been utterly impossible without gasoline. No, there isn't anything alluring about gasoline, but it certainly enables us to be constantly about the Father's business, and I consider it one of the most important items in our budget and so I have no hesitation or compunction about asking for money for it.

At Christmas we distributed about three thousand bags of candy and fruit in all the institutions, we give toys to all the children, cigars to all the men in the Jail and Workhouse, and moving-pictures in the Workhouse and Industrial School. Incidentally, I may say that our Church is responsible for three moving picture machines, the one in the Infirmary, the one at Koch, and the one in the Workhouse.

Also, for the last two years it has been customary for the missionary to visit every institution on Christmas morning, taking with him a quartette of carol singers. The quartette sings the old, familiar carols in chapels, wards, and cell-rooms, and it really is wonderful. This last Christmas, at the City Hospital men's eyes filled with tears, and at the Jail the guards, who are men not used to sentiment, fol-

lowed us from section to section to hear the singing. It is one of the most beautiful ways I know of to wish those thousands of people a merry Christmas.

Finally, what I am also anxious about is to know whether you feel as I do and whether you have the same hope that I have. That hope is nothing less than complete victory for all that the Cross of Christ stands for, physical and spiritual prosperity for every man and woman and child, and that means that there is some more nailing to be done. We have got to make it easier to do right than wrong, we must make it more fun to do right than wrong. You know that is exactly what the Montessori System does in the education of the child. It makes education so constantly interesting that the child has no more interest in getting into mischief. Is it too much to hope that some day, when it is easier for men to earn a living than it is now, when opportunity is equal for all men, as it is not now, when sanitary conditions may be easier and less expensive to secure than they are now, and when the feeble-minded and the epileptic and the inebriate are taken care of on industrial farms and given tasks suited to their mental strength as they are not now, is it then too much to hope that men will find it more fun to be decent and women will find it more fun to be virtuous and children will find it more fun to study and to work and to grow up good men and women? Visionary and impractical, I am told. Visionary it may be, but I will not believe it is impractical. I remember that Jesus was a visionary, a dreamer of dreams, and if by practical we mean something that will work, then Jesus deserves the title of the most practical man who ever lived. Greed, selfishness, militarism, die of their own sins, while the dreams of Jesus are the only things that have worked wherever and whenever men have tried to work them. It is visionary to hope, to hope for anything, and I am glad that it is, because I know that visions and dreams and hopes are the most real things in the world. Let us hope and dream and pray, nailing everything to Christ's Cross, because that Cross must and shall conquer. We have the world to gain and we shall lose in victory only evil, only injustice, only the overflowing jails and poorhouses, only the stunted bodies and the broken hearts.

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